

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method for presenting categorized information on a computer-enabled user interface, the method comprising: displaying one or more categories for the information; receiving a user selection of a category of the one or more categories; and  
5 independently retrieving data associated with the selected category so that the displayed categories remain responsive to user interaction while the data is being retrieved.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising: placing a request for  
10 retrieval of the data in a queue; and processing the request from the queue asynchronously with respect to the displaying step.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising: receiving a user request for  
15 cancellation of the data retrieval; and, in response to the user request, canceling the data retrieval.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the selected category is one of a plurality of categories selected by the user, and the method further comprises:  
receiving a user request to boost the priority of at least one selected category; and, in  
20 response to receiving the user request, boosting the priority of the at least one selected category.
5. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

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6. The method of claim 1, wherein the displaying step is performed by a main thread and the retrieving step is performed by a worker thread executing asynchronously with respect to the main thread.

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7. The method of claim 6, wherein when the worker thread has finished retrieving the data, it notifies the main thread that the data is available.

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8. The method of claim 6, wherein the worker thread places the retrieved data in a cache, the main thread accesses the data from the cache and displays the data.

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9. The method of claim 1, wherein the retrieved data is stored in a cache, the method further comprising obtaining the data from the cache for display on a user interface.

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10. The method of claim 9, further comprising: receiving a user request to refresh the display of the data; and, in response to the user request, marking the data in the cache as dirty.

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11. The method of claim 9, further comprising: receiving a user request to display a partially retrieved portion of the data; in response to the user request, obtaining the partially retrieved portion from the cache; and displaying the partially retrieved portion of the data.

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12. The method of claim 1, wherein the categories are displayed as nodes of a graphical hierarchy.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the graphical hierarchy is a tree.

14. A computer-implemented method for displaying a plurality of categories, the method comprising: displaying a populated portion of the plurality of categories on a screen; displaying a placeholder to represent an unpopulated portion of the plurality of categories, wherein the placeholder indicates to the user the status of the data required to populate the unpopulated portion.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the plurality of categories are displayed as nodes of a graphical hierarchy, and wherein the placeholder is displayed as a node of the graphical hierarchy.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the graphical hierarchy is a tree.

17. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 14.

18. A computer-implemented method for presenting data, the method comprising: executing a first thread for displaying a graphical hierarchy having one or more nodes; and, executing, independently of the first thread, a second thread of execution for retrieving data associated with at least one of the one or more nodes.

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19. The method of claim 18, wherein the second thread retrieves data for populating the hierarchy.
- 5 20. The method of claim 18, further comprising receiving a user selection of a node of the one or more nodes, wherein the second thread retrieves data associated with the selected node.
- 10 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising displaying the retrieved data on a computer screen adjacent to the hierarchy.
22. The method of claim 20, further comprising displaying the retrieved data on a computers screen in one pane on a computer screen and displaying the hierarchy on another.
- 15 23. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 18.
24. The method of claim 18, wherein thesecond thread retrieves data based on an assumption as to whether the user wishes to have the data retrieved, without an explicit selection by the user.
- 20 25. The method of claim 18, wherein the second thread retrieves data based on which nodes have been frequently selected by the user.

26. A system for presenting categorized information on a computer-enabled user interface, the system comprising: a user interface for receiving a user selection of at least one category of information; a means for executing a main thread for requesting the retrieval of data associated with the selected category; a cache that is accessible to the main thread; and a means for executing a worker thread for retrieving the requested data and storing it in the cache.